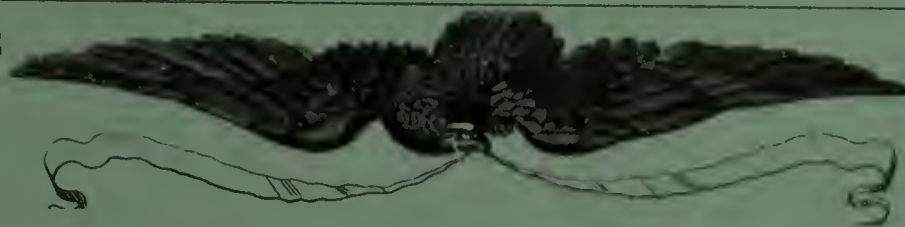

JOURNAL OF THE BARBER COIN COLLECTORS' SOCIETY

Volume 8, #3

Fall 1997



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BCCS CHARTER MEMBER #2

JOURNAL OF THE
BARBER COIN COLLECTORS' SOCIETY

Published quarterly. Dedicated to bringing together people with similar interests in Barber Coinage for the purpose of advancing appreciation of this series.

OFFICERS

Philip Carrigan	<i>President</i>
Russell Easterbrooks	<i>Editor, BCCS Journal</i>
Paul Reuter	<i>Secretary/Treasurer</i>
Tom Mulvaney	<i>Photographer</i>
Regular Contributing Editor	<i>Jack White and Chris Weeks</i>

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BCCS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This third quarter issue signals the start of the fall season and likely renewed focus on numismatic activities for many of us.

I've written frequently about attendance at regional or national numismatic shows or conventions. The New York ANA Convention was a top-notch experience! The word on New York as a location seems to be better than expected, good attendance with some mention of high prices for basic amenities (coffee at \$3.00).

Our annual meeting was held on Saturday, August 2, with approximately a dozen members or other Barber enthusiasts present. We particularly appreciate Paul Gilkes, longtime BCCS member, covering our meeting on assignment from *Coin World*. Additionally, numismatic author Kevin Flynn attended and provided some lively remarks on misplaced numerals in dates (i.e., found on the rim or elsewhere). Look for these with Barbers.

One subject of discussion was identifying a BCCS member as the key contact at national meetings. This process will allow fellow members to informally gather at a Baltimore or F.U.N. Show to renew old friendships or create new ones. Additionally, one could share information on dealer's stock, auction lots and more. Joe Whittle volunteered to be the contact for the Baltimore Show, November 13-16. He can be paged at the show or contacted by calling (302) 234-0850 day or 234-9837 eve. If you plan to attend a major auction or show (e.g., F.U.N.), please give Russell your name (and any means of contacting you before or at the show) in advance and you'll be listed in the *Journal*. This idea is driven by my belief we should know we are passing fellow BCCS members as we walk a bourse floor.

One additional topic discussed was the idea of a member directory. I don't believe we would conceive of a member name and address resource but individuals could elect to supply an Email address or post office box or simply the state where they reside. Please indicate your thoughts on this idea by any convenient means, postcard included.

On October 21 through 23, the John J. Pittman Collection Part I will be auctioned in Baltimore by David Akers. If you believe Pittman's holdings were US gold and proofs along with Canadian, this is true but the sale presents a few Barber (Liberty) nickels and a nice set of BU/proof Barber dimes. I will be at Baltimore on Sunday the 19th; it should be a great experience just looking at his coins.

thanks,
Phil Carrigan



FROM THE EDITOR

The mail brought a number of articles, photos, and interesting comments contributing to the fall *Journal*. Thank you for all your input, it does make a difference. The cover of the fall *Journal* is dedicated to the Denver mint, along with the accompanying article. I hope to highlight the San Francisco mint, and earthquake of 1906 in a future issue. The history surrounding the Barber coinage time period is filled with exciting events.

I read recently of an interesting Barber discovery, so I dropped John Wexler a note asking about the particulars. John was kind enough to send an article and some wonderful photos describing this new Barber Variety. David Lange took the time from his busy schedule to send me a stunning photo of an 1892 Barber half with a major die break on the reverse, and Dave Lawrence submitted his view of the state of the market. Along with articles by Jack White, Chris Weeks, Paul Reuter, Obert Huffman, Larry Carr, Dave Bowers and Thomas Rothacker, I hope you enjoy the journal.

Welcome to the new members who joined our society these past few months, I hope you find the *Journal* enjoyable and informative. With the approaching holiday's, remember, a membership to the BCCS is a great gift idea!

I had the good fortune of purchasing an 1894-S Barber quarter that displayed a variety described by Breen in his book. This variety shows the mint mark struck so far to the right, it nearly touches the arrows! I hope to present an article on this topic in a future issue of the *Journal*.

On a sad note, my grandfather passed away recently at the age of 93. His collecting and craft interests profoundly contributed to our family's enjoyment with these hobbies, he will be missed.

Finally, the fall *Journal* ends with a photo (page 28) of a fellow collector, who on Halloween night, while rushing to an area coin show, sustained a dreadful accident.

Russell Easterbrooks



THE JOURNAL NEEDS YOUR ARTICLES!

If you've got some information to share with our Society,
we'd like to publish it. Our Society needs your input!
Send your articles and information for the Barber Bits section, to;
Russell at the address, on page one.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS DECEMBER 15th

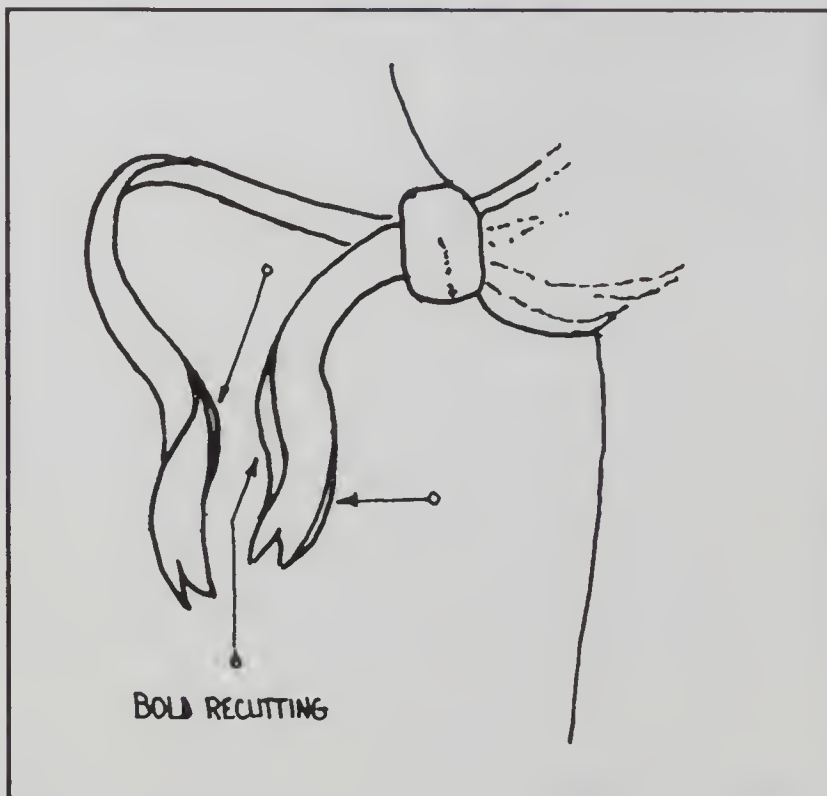
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

.....

Mr. Easterbrooks,

When I read the article about the new obverse hub for 1909 by Chris Weeks, it explained a mystery 1909 half I purchased a few years ago. This coin may be the "missing link" proving Mr. Weeks observations of the different widths between the ribbons on pre-1909 and post-1909 halves. The 1909 Barber half I have is a nice AU, with a very strong recut pair of ribbons. This coin appears to have the old and new ribbon positions. I have enclosed a drawing of the ribbon area from my half.

Thank you,
David Lund Sr.



Russell,

I've enclosed a photograph of an 1892-P half dollar with a simply amazing die break on its reverse. When I saw this coin at our offices I was certain that it must be a known variety, yet I could find no illustration of it in back issues of the *BCCS Journal* or in Dave Lawrence's book.

The coin was submitted for grading and encapsulation with no mention of the die break, and we certified it as MS-63. It's an attractive coin overall, with very old, speckled toning that deepens toward the borders. The break is not only very long but quite deep as well. Its height is clearly greater than that of the rim, and this coin certainly wouldn't stack properly.

Breaks of this sort within a relief element are quite unusual, as such severe breaks more typically occur at or near the border. It's possible that an earlier die state may be found showing just a crack, but I couldn't locate this in my library. There certainly couldn't be a much later die state, as this break seems terminal.

Sincerely,
David W. Lange
Director of Research

(see David's photo on next page)



DENVER MINT HISTORY

By Russell Easterbrooks

Collectors assembling sets of Barber coins are challenged by obtaining issues minted by four different facilities. The newest of these mints, the Denver mint, began operations in the midst of the Barber era. Established in the shadow of one of this country's most rugged and prolific mining regions, the Denver mint was part of a city that sprung from a wilderness dotted with Indian tepees and prairie schooners.

Gold was first discovered in what we now know as the state of Colorado in 1858, along the Platte River. This discovery quickly created a "Gold Rush" into a remote wilderness. The lack of an easy method of transportation into this mountainous area, coupled with Indian hostilities, created severe hardships for many. Once miners reached the gold field they experienced considerable difficulty disposing of their new found riches. Interestingly, in just a few years this wilderness area grew to a population of 4,759. By 1885 Denver's population exploded to 54,000; and by 1895, 160,300!

During the early 1860's three firms namely, Clack, Gruber & Co., John Parsons & Co., and John Conway & Co. were manufacturing 5 and 10 dollar



gold pieces. Congress quickly saw the need for assaying the large amounts of gold and silver that was being discovered, and approved the establishment of a mint in Denver. The Secretary of the Treasury appointed a committee to purchase the lot, building and apparatus of Clark, Gruber & Co. for use as the branch mint in Denver. Because of the difficulties transporting machinery to so distant a point from the East, operations did not begin until 1863, and then only as a melting, refining, and assaying facility. Operations continued on this basis until 1869,

when Congress decided to limit the facility to an assay office.

By 1895 Denver had become the great smelting center of the West, handling a large percent of the gold, silver, and copper ores of Colorado and every mining state and territory in the Rocky Mountains. The Omaha and Grant Smelting and Refining Company, boasted a daily capacity of 1,000 tons, as well as the tallest smokestack on the continent! The Globe Smelter and Refining Company was shipping fine silver bullion to San Francisco amounting to over

4.5 million dollars in 1895 alone. Activity in gold and mining continued at an alarming rate. The states gold product in 1892 totaled over 5 million dollars, ballooning to over 15 million dollars by 1895. Mint officials tabulated Colorado's silver production for 1895 at over 24,035,000 ounces, with an average price of 65.3 cents per ounce. By this time, Congress provided an act allowing the Denver branch mint to begin coining gold and silver coins. The old mint building was sold, and a new building was constructed, where minting operations began in February 1906. The Mint Report of 1906 describes in great detail the enormous amount of equipment necessary to begin operations in the new five-story building. In part there was; fourteen bullion balances varying in size, eight furnaces for ingot melting, three coining presses, rolling mills, cutting presses, grinding and edge rounding machines, counting boards, scales, bagging equipment, etc.

Besides the three Barber denominations, the new mint began coining 5, 10, and 20 dollar gold pieces. The value of this mints operations were enhanced by the fact that the Philadelphia and New Orleans mints furloughed their work force 3 and 4 months respectfully on account of a lack of silver bullion. Also, the San Francisco mint operations were interrupted by the catastrophic earthquake and ensuing fires that devastated the city during April, 1906.

Coin varieties were limited during Denver's inaugural year of operations. Walter Breen states proofs probably exist celebrating inception of coinage by this new branch mint. I have a 1906 Barber dime which displays a "broken" D mint mark, probably caused by the lower part of the D being filled with grease during striking, and an 06-D dime with a strongly repunched mint mark (cover photo). Dave Lawrence describes several 1906-D dimes with repunched dates, similar to the one featured below, in his Barber Dime book. ❖



INVERTED MM ON 1909-S

By Obert W. Huffman #387

Several years ago I was studying mint marks on Half Dollars when I received my 1995 Fall Issue of the *BCCS Journal*, Vol VI, #3. I was looking at the pictures of a 1909-S Half Dollar at the bottom of page 14. There were two pictures of the 1909-S half dollar, one showing the normal "S" and the other picture showing what was termed a "Top Heavy S". I took a closer look at the picture and thought to myself that the MM looked upside down.

It was not until later in 1995 that I found one at a local coin show. After an examination under my microscope and some close up photos to study, I came to the conclusion that the MM appeared to have been punched in upside down, and PCI agreed with my finding.

To date I have discovered other denomination coins with upside down "S" mint marks. All my discovery "S" MM upside down pieces are in PCI capsules. At my request, Mark Powell, the senior grader for PCI, slabbed the coins for me as the DISCOVERY COIN and the date on each slab of the first ones I sent him. No discovery of any inverted MM, (upside down "S" MM) had been known at this time for the dates I sent him. They were all slabbed and dated in January, March 1997 and one in April. Originally, some of these coins were slabbed as an upside down "S" earlier, but I wanted them with the notation on the slab as "Discovery Coin" and the date, so I had to send some back to be re-slabbed and so they carry the later date sent in, not the first time.

I have other finds with the "S" MM inverted put in PCI slabs beside the 1909-S Barber Half. The 1909-S is not slabbed as a discovery coin although I think it is. The reason I did not have it slabbed as the discovery coin was because I had seen the article in the *BCCS Journal* that showed "Top Heavy S" which I recognized as having the "S" MM inverted.

Other inverted "S" MM (upside down) I have beside the 1909-S Half is a 1897-S Silver Dollar, 1945-S Lincoln Cent, 1945-S Mercury Dime, 1945-S Washington Quarter, 1945-S WL Half Dollar, 1946-S Lincoln Cent and 1946-S Roosevelt Dime.

I don't have a picture for this article but I have found a 1909-S Barber Quarter with the MM upside down very similar to the MM on the half dollar. It has a small ding near the MM and I want to find one with a nice field around the Mint Mark to take a picture of to send in.

I have not made a determination as to rarity but feel they are not rare. More study and others now will be looking and so I feel that a little more time is needed. I have found the 1945-S Quarter and Half Dollar easiest to find so far.

If anyone cares to contact me, please do so. I am always interested in new finds. My address is 7417 Kentwood Dr., Biloxi, MS 39532-2728. Phone 1-601-392-4149.



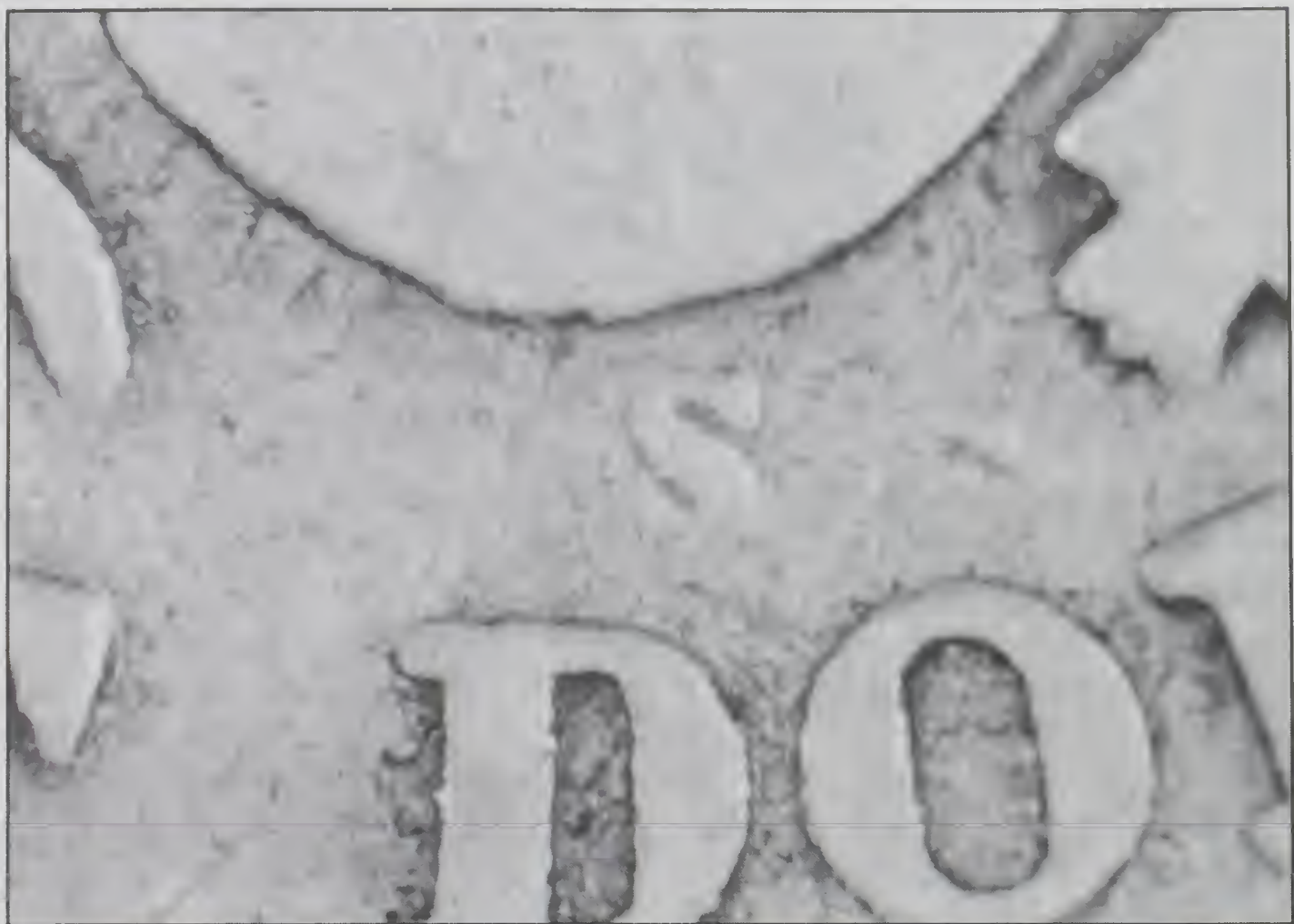


Photo Courtesy Obert Huffman

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MINT ENGRAVERS AS COIN DEALERS

By Q. David Bowers

We reproduce herewith a letter from T. Louis Comparette, curator of the Mint Collection at Philadelphia, a post he had held since 1905. Dated July 28, 1920, the letter is addressed to Farran Zerbe, past president of the American Numismatic Association, and a gentleman who traveled widely with his Money of the World exhibit which he set up at banks and other public places. By doing this, Zerbe was able to sell coin-related souvenirs and also to buy rare coins from the public. Years later in autumn 1928, Zerbe sold his collection to the Chase Bank, New York City, which then opened the display as the Chase Money Museum.

In this 1920 letter, Zerbe asked Comparette as to the mintage of what we now know today in 1997 as the famous MCMVII (1907) Ultra High Relief \$20. Comparette, who certainly was in a position to know as he had been on the scene when these pieces were minted, commented as follows:

Of the very first issue or rather trial-piece of the double eagle, by Saint-Gaudens, it now appears that 22 were struck. But no figures are reliable, because it is now known that the Engraver at the mint at that time abused his office and struck pieces surreptitiously for his own advantage. Two specimens of the coin were found in his collection after his demise, and how many he made and sold is unknown.

Of the double eagle, size [diameter] of the eagle, there are two in the Cabinet. How many others are in existence I do not know. I have had reliable information of one being sold [this specimen was later in the Boyd, Farouk, and Wilkinson collections]. So there must be at least three in existence.

Eagle: a) Unmilled (usually designated knife-edge) about 625 struck and issued. b) Narrow milling (that is, with a narrow border) and with periods before and after .TEN. DOLLARS, about 50 specimens, according to official statement.

Should be glad to receive Leach's "Recollections etc." Glad to hear of your improved health. I wish I could say as much for myself.

*Sincerely yours,
T. L. Comparette*

The reference in the first paragraph is to Charles E. Barber, chief engraver at the Mint, who is charged as having abused his office and struck pieces surreptitiously for his own advantage. Comparette related further, very matter of factly, "Two coins were found in his collection after his demise, and how many he made and sold is unknown."

In our January sale of the Norweb Collection specimen of the MCMVII Ultra High relief \$20, we gave a list of pieces known to us, amounting to nearly 20 examples. How many more were struck is not known, but quite probably the number was fewer than 30 totally. Various quantities such as 18 and 22 have appeared in past literature. Barber kept his own counsel as did George T. Morgan, the latter being Barber's successor as chief engraver upon Barber's death in 1917. Morgan kept up the tradition of production of pieces for his own profit, and in our sale of the silver dollars in the Norweb Collection in the 1980's, we quoted some correspondence from Morgan whereby he was making up Special Proofs, 1921-1922, for private and confidential sale to collectors.

Returning to the subject of MCMVII (1907) Extremely High Relief \$20, it seems that the official conduit or funnel from Barber to the market was Henry Chapman, the well known Philadelphia dealer. Although the figures are not known with precision, it seems that the retail price of these was posted at \$1,000 to \$1,100 in the years after 1907. This was a high price on the numismatic market, and sales were necessarily slow. What percentage of this money went to Chapman as seller and what went to Barber as provider is not known. Perhaps it was a joint venture or perhaps Chapman simply received them on consignment from Barber. During the 10 years from 1907 to Barber's death in 1917, some other fancy pieces were made, including at least two 1915 Panama-Pacific commemorative half dollars struck in gold, and without the usual S mintmark, these being private impressions from the dies before the mintmark was punched in. The two known examples are each struck on planchets cut from \$20 pieces dated 1908.

Exactly what part Charles E. Barber played in the making and sale of rare coins during this decade is not known, but quite probably Morgan was part of the game as well, as the two worked very closely together. In turn, Morgan's successor as chief engraver, John R. Sinnock, occasionally made special pieces as well, for private distribution, but not necessarily for private profit. An example is provided by a documented 1936 *Proof* Elgin half dollar, made by Sinnock for the designer of the coin, Trygve Rovelstad.

Editors Note: This article is reprinted courtesy of David Bowers, from "Rare Coin Review" #117. ❖



Charles E. Barber (Courtesy of Coin World)

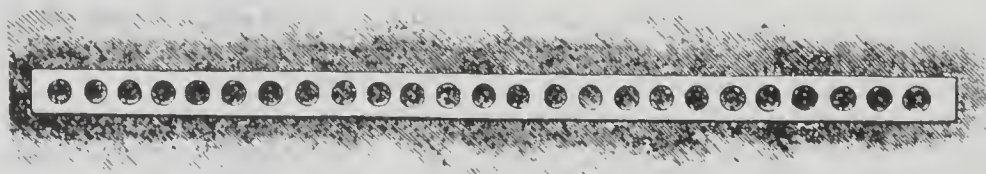
IN SEARCH OF A TRADE

By Larry Carr

Having been mainly a Barber collector of 10 years now, I have enjoyed the hunt for some time. Our members will remember an article I wrote for the *Journal* in 1996 detailing the assembly of a dime set in Fine to VF. Living in a small town in Northern Michigan restricts much of my collecting habit to a select group of mail order dealers I have learned through experience to be honest. I have found my best source of **O mint** material to come from one particular dealer in Louisiana. I'm sure old estates come to his shop. Original coins last circulated in this area of the country and will re-enter the market here with the passing of an old collector. It would be interesting to know, if collectors in Louisiana have also found this to be true.

By far the best coin show of the year for me is the Biannual Michigan Numismatic Association show. This show caters to the collector and always has over 200 dealers. Last May I went to the show with my want list and two key coins to **Trade**. I had a 1913s VG8 Quarter and a 1916d Mercury VG10 Dime (both ANA graded). I enjoy talking to the dealers almost as much as the coins. I proposed an even trade of both coins for a nice 1901s Good quarter or the 1916d for a Fine 1895o dime. Many dealers were interested. Unfortunately neither coin was available at the show (also there were no same date coins as nice as mine).

There is a lesson from this, fellow Barber collectors. The Barber keys are and remain scarce. Their appreciation in value over the last 5 years is no fluke. I believe this will continue for some time to come. I see more collectors my age at large shows than in years past. Scarceness will continue as the very limited supply is under greater collecting pressure. Good coins and deals are out there, but will come to collectors with a game plan based on knowledge. The Barber hunt is similar to the fall Michigan Mania, deer hunting. Venison is brought to the table by hunters who study, are patient, and make their best shot when the time is right. Fall is just around the corner and so is the next Michigan show. I will see what the hunt brings, when the leaves change.



STRIP FROM WHICH PLANCHETS ARE CUT.

FAKE TWENTY CENTS

By Jack White

In the last issue of the *Barber Journal* I wrote of a brass counterfeit 1902 dime. At the same show I found that fake, I doubled my output with a pair of 1901 dimes that I believe are nickel silver. The pair came from the same dealers stock. Both "coins" fooled him. He had each graded and priced as genuine Barber dimes. Each of these coins looked unusual to me in his case, and upon an in hand inspection, I recognized both of them as fakes.

More than likely both were produced by the same hand, as the dates, though very crude, are remarkably similar. Both dates exhibit flat bottoms to the 9 and 0, as well as a crack connecting the 0 and 1 at the bases. Though each coin would grade VF only a single letter the "L" is visible on Liberty's head band.

One coin appears lightly granular to the unaided eye. The obverse denticles are very crude and incomplete below the date. The reverse is rotated slightly, with denticles crude and misshapen, appearing stronger on the left side, and incomplete on the right. The "E" in dime is strongly doubled, especially at the left top and base, as well as along the letter's entire top.

The second coin is significantly larger in diameter, nearly as large as a cent! The obverse legend is very far from the rim, indicating nearly immediately that the coin is a fake. The denticles are very long and pronounced. The reverse denticles are of similar length. The right ribbon end shows traces of doubling. The overall quality of the reverse is inferior to the previous "coin", but it's obverse is sharper.

I have seen many counterfeit Barber quarters and half dollars and own some of each. However, the three fake dimes I found at that show are the lone specimens of Barber dimes I've seen.

Editors Note: I examined each coin and found them very interesting. Because of Tom Mulvaney's busy schedule I was unable to get these coins photographed for this Journal. I have never seen a fake Barber dime at a show, and I would agree with Jack in saying they are not as common as Barber quarters and halves.



MEMORIES OF A "V" NICKEL

By Thomas L. Rothacker Sr.

The year was 1961 and I was an eleven year old with a passion for baseball. I had never given any thought about coins other than to spend every nickel I had on packs of baseball cards.

It was a normal family visit to my Grandmothers one Sunday afternoon that changed my feelings about coins and set me on a course in the world of collecting that is still going strong.

While looking through my Grandmothers' pantry from some cookies, I came across an old coffee can filled with coins. Being naturally curious, I asked if I could dump them out on the kitchen table and look at them. Never seeing coins like these before lead me to look very closely at the different types and denominations. I found Indian Head pennies, Buffalo nickels, Mercury dimes, and one Liberty nickel.

The Liberty nickel, which I found out was also known as a "V" nickel for the Roman Numeral Five on the reverse, was the coin that sparked most of my curiosity. This nickel, dated 1897, was a well worn example of this beautiful series of coins.

Though I didn't know it at the time, this "V" nickel was the beginning of my new found interest in coin collecting as a hobby.

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My Grandmother was kind enough to give me all of the coins in that can and, as they say, the rest is history.

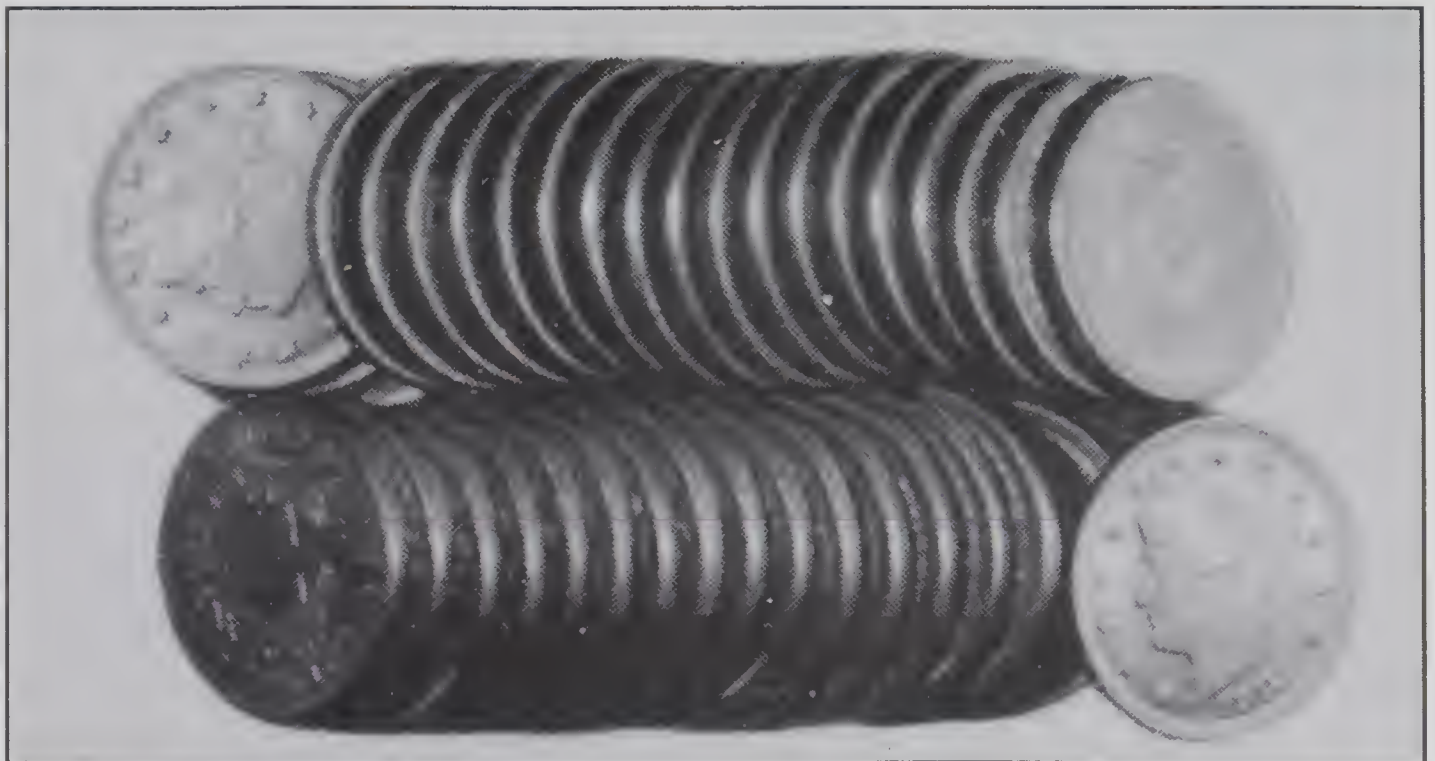
I was bitten by the coin bug for sure and soon began to work diligently on completing a low grade set of the Liberty nickels. I found the common dates of the set for a very small price, but as I got into the scarcer dates the prices started to get too much for me, at least at this stage of my collecting, so I decided to move into other series of coins. For some strange reason, however, I always returned to work the hardest on the "V" nickels and found them to be the most fascinating.

With age, experience, and research, I developed a base of knowledge that enabled me to be a well informed and careful collector of the Liberty nickel. I have significantly improved this collection over the course of the last thirty-five years, and have developed a strong interest in other Barber coins.

The "V" nickel has never gained the popularity that many other series of U.S. coins has, but its simple elegance and majestic beauty clearly demonstrate the vision that Charles Barber had in creating this outstanding piece of minor coinage.

I am convinced that the popularity of this series of coins will surely increase. There is already evidence that indicates this to be true. Whatever the collecting fate of this coin may be, it will always be very dear to me, for, after all, that old, worn 1897 nickel is where it all started for me.

Editors Note: We all remember our collecting "roots" and I am glad Thomas shared his memories with us. As a relatively new member of our society I look forward to more of Tom's observations.



MAJOR BARBER QUARTER DOUBLED DIE DISCOVERED

By John A. Wexler

Collectors of Barber coinage can celebrate the fact that a major doubled die reverse has been discovered. The doubled die appears on the reverse of an 1899 quarter. Credit for the discovery of this variety goes to Andrew W. Prechtl.

The doubled die is a Class II (Distorted Hub Doubling) variety with a spread towards the center of the die. A very strong spread shows on the letters of QUARTER DOLLAR and the arrows. Additional doubling shows on UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, both wing tips, the left edge of the banner, and the eagle's legs.

In addition to the Class II spread towards the center, the letters of QUARTER also show evidence of a CW spread to the doubling while the letters of AMERICA show a CCW spread. Both the CW and CCW spreads would be the result of Class V (Pivoted Hub Doubling) from a pivot point near the rim at about 12:00. The upper letters of DOLLAR show very close multiple hubbings which could number five making this a Quintupled Die and not just a doubled die.

Class II doubled dies occur due to the fact that the working die must be hubbed more than once in order to produce a satisfactory image of the design on the die. Between hubbings the die must be removed from the hubbing press and heated to soften it. This process is known as annealing. When the die is annealed, it may expand from the heat. Usually when the die cools it will return to its original diameter, however, sometimes it doesn't. When the next impression is made in the expanded die the result will be an impression which is more centralized, producing a doubled image where the stronger image is spread towards the center of the die.

Class V doubling occurs when the hub or die pivots on a point near the rim of the hub/die in a CW or CCW direction. The notorious 1995 doubled die obverse Lincoln cent is an example of Class V doubling. This quarter exhibits a CW spread from a pivot on one of the hubbings and a CCW spread from a pivot on a different hubbing. Working dies may need to be hubbed as many as five or six times before a satisfactory image is produced in the die so it certainly is possible that this is a quintupled die. One known Kennedy half dollar variety shows five clear and distinct images on some of the design elements and letters.

The specimen which was examined and photographed graded VF and appeared to have been whizzed at some point. A nice AU or BU specimen may show additional characteristics to the doubling and may confirm the quintupling of the die. If any members of the Barber Coin Collector's Society should find a high grade specimen, I'd love to hear from you and see the coin so that I can shoot additional photos and some further research on the variety.

This variety has been listed as 1899 25c DDR-001 in the Wexler Doubled



Die Files. Although the doubling should be enough to identify this variety, it does have some distinguishing markers. Two die scratches can be found running through the upper STA of STATES. A die crack runs from the right wing tip north into the rim above the ST of STATES. A die scratch also extends from the top of the banner above the BU of PLURIBUS north to the star.

As noted, if you should be fortunate enough to find one of these, we would love to hear from you. I can be reached at P.O. Box 544, Quakertown, PA 18951-0544. If you have any questions about doubled dies or would like information on joining the SDDCA (Society of Doubled Die Collectors of America), I can be reached at that same address. Be sure to include a large self-addressed stamped envelope if a response is desired. Do not send any coins with your initial letter. Directions for sending coins will be included with the response to your letter. It's time to get out there and start searching for this one. Good luck in the hunt. ❖



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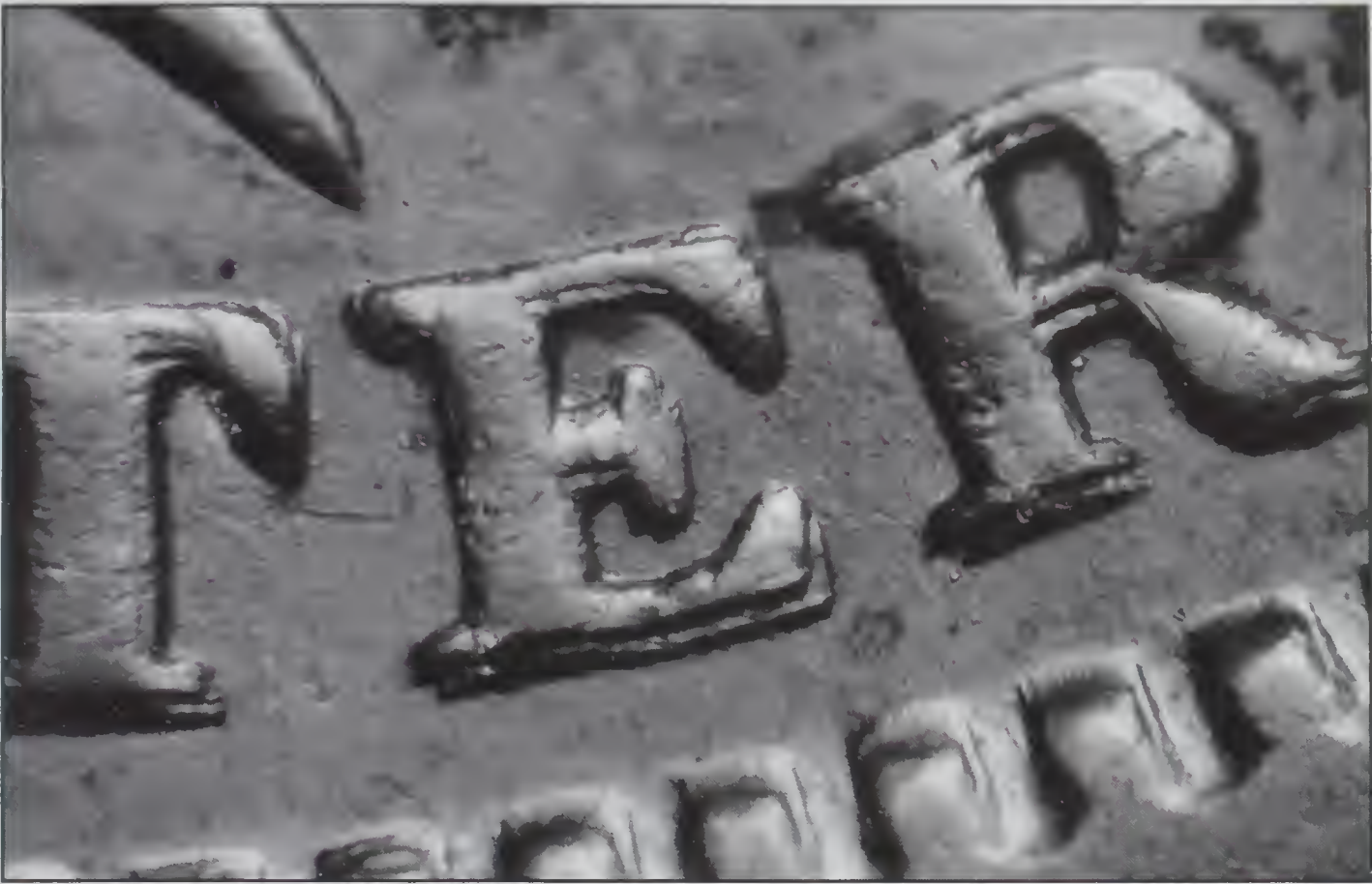
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COMMENTS REGARDING LIBERTY NICKELS

By Paul Reuter

After closely examining two dozen Liberty nickels, which were certified in grades MS 63 and MS 64, I have some random comments about the series. Maybe some of this will encourage Barber collectors to consider this series in their collecting plans.

First of all, I always look for die cracks and I was not disappointed as three coins had major cracks. This incidence is lower than I previously found in Barber quarters where 25% showed cracks and in Barber halves where 16% showed cracks. But a 13% showing in the nickels makes it worthwhile to scan the coins for this feature.

The 1883, no cents, coin had a crack running through the date to star #1, the lower left star. This crack then continued part way to star #2. The 1886 coin had a crack running through the date and then to the neck and down to the edge of the coin below star #1. Finally the 1894 had a nice crack running full length through "STATES" on the reverse.

The most common location of die cracks in Barber quarters is around the date, the lower edge of the neck and lower stars. While my sample of nickels is small, it does seem to follow the same pattern.

I looked closely at the stars surrounding the Liberty figure. They are six pointed and have very distinct score lines separating the six segments or points. As the stars are a relatively high relief feature it seems to me that their condition and the distinctness of the score lines can be used to judge the die state related to that particular coin. As an example, the 1912 coin while graded MS 63, has stars that are flattened down and the score lines are just barely there. The overall appearance of the coin is sort of mushy even though there is no evidence of wear. Thus the stars and the general appearance of the coin indicate a late die state.

Several coins in the sample exhibited very sharp stars with deep score lines in just 11 or 12 of the stars. The remaining one or two stars showed little or no score lines. This was probably caused by grease or dirt in that portion of the die as there were no signs of wear on the coin, but they were evidently of an early die state.

Digressing a bit more on the subject of stars, Barber history notes that there was some debate over how many points should be present on stars of the various denominations. Both five pointed and six pointed were considered but the Liberty nickels got the six pointed version. By contrast the Barber quarters and halves got both, six pointed on the obverse and five pointed on the reverse. The six pointed are prominent just as those on the Liberty nickel while the five pointed are low profile and do not show score lines as are common on the six pointed variety.

It's interesting to note that the Barber coins are about the last series to be named after their designer. Barber gave us dimes, quarters and halves and we call them Barbers. But he also gave us nickels struck from 1883 to 1912 and we call them Liberty or "V" nickels rather than Barbers. You have to wonder how the terminology evolved.

This series is worth a Barber collectors consideration. With just 32 coins, that is ignoring the 1913, it is really a short series, when compared to the 75 dates and mint marks in the larger denomination Barber coins. Also, there are no real expensive keys such as the three in the quarters. Many of the common dates are often advertised with MS 64 dates going for just about wholesale prices. In lower grades, a complete set in Extra Fine can be put together for about \$2000. While this may sound like heresy, an MS 64 set of nickels can be put together for about \$2000 less than the cost of a 1901-S quarter in AU 55.

These are attractive coins and they have a nice resemblance to the rest of the "Barber" coins. Why not take a look? ❖

(See Editors Note and photo on following page)

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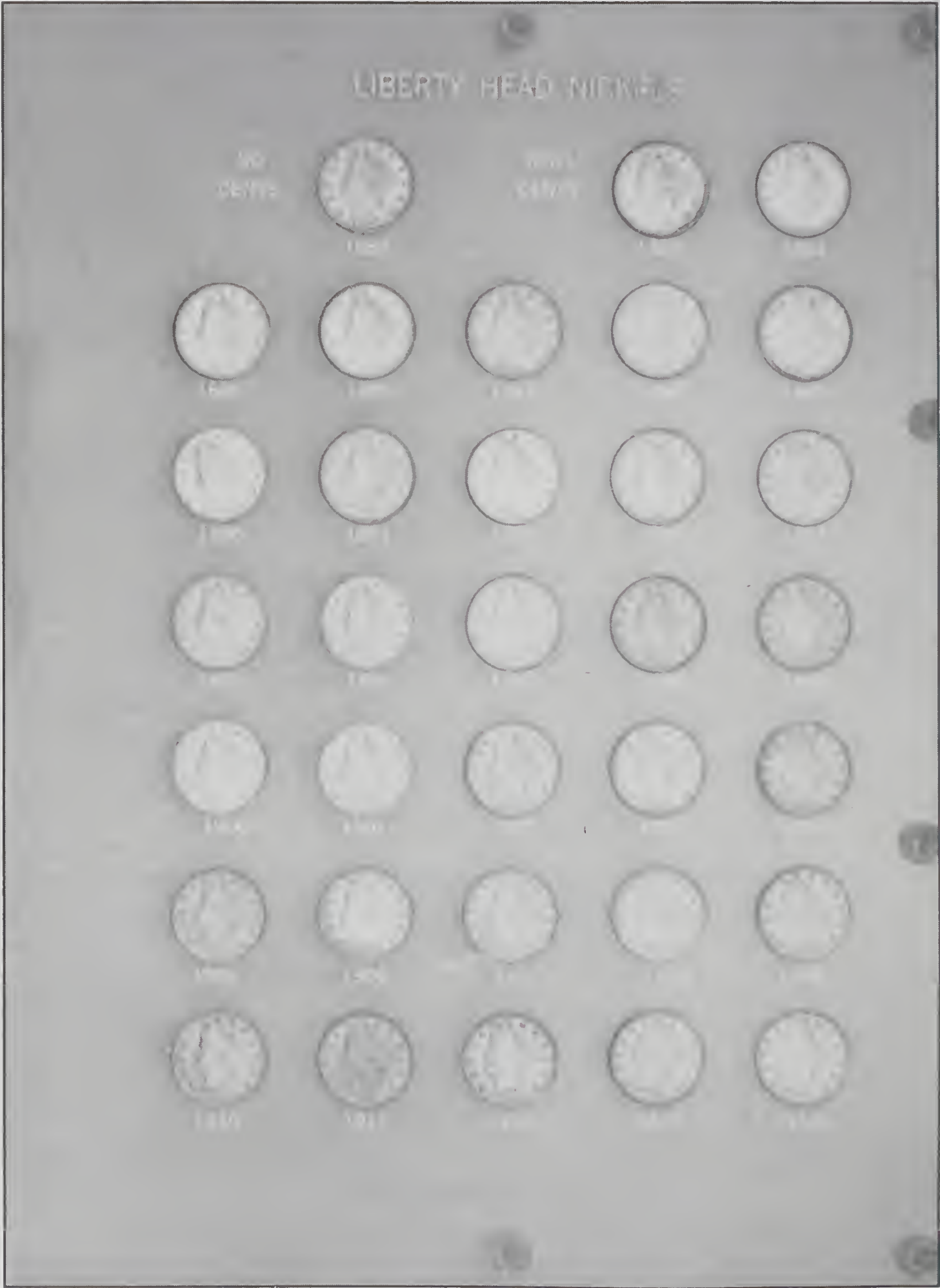
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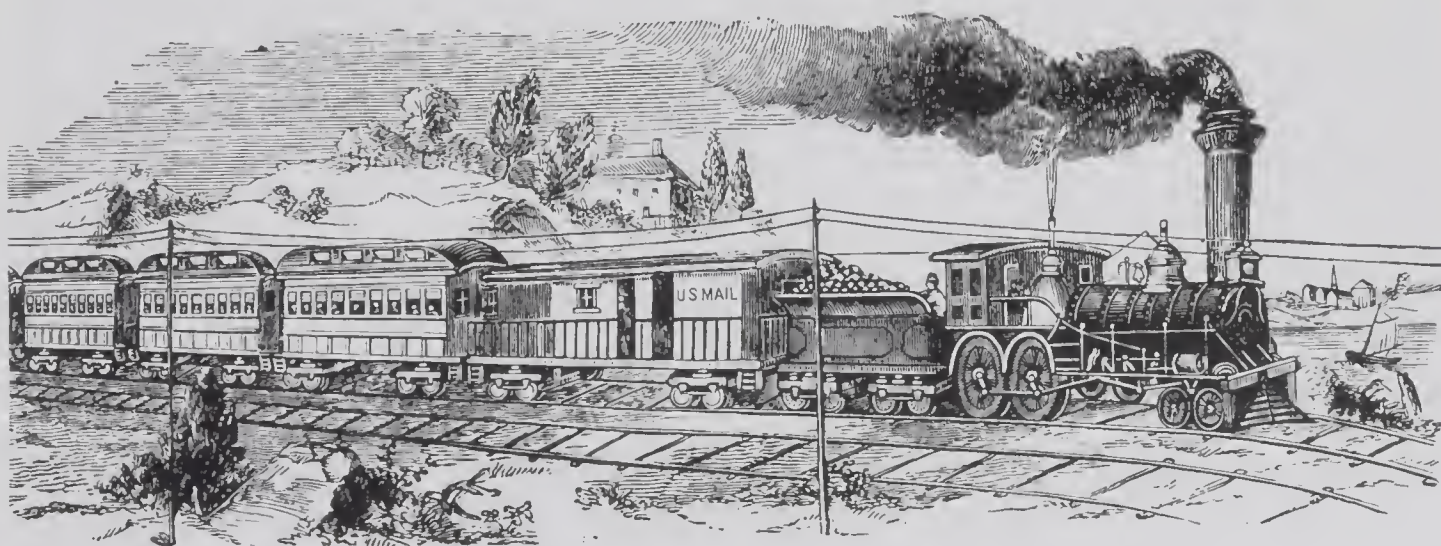
Editors Note: This interesting set of nickels was sold at the Central States Numismatic Society Sale of 1985, for \$13,420.00 including the 10% buyers fee. Catalog's description of these coins on page 23.

LIBERTY NICKEL SET 1883 NC to 1912-S



LIBERTY NICKEL SET 1883 NC to 1912-S

Complete Liberty Nickel Set 1883-NC to 1912-S mounted in a white Capitol plastic holder with leaterlike binder covers. Perhaps an addition to the complete Shield Nickel set? This highly popular set contains specimens ranging in grade and condition from Proof-65 to EF with the emphasis being on Mint State pieces. The successful bidder on the Shield Nickel set might well consider this complete set as well, since it contains some of the top dates in top condition. We will describe all dates but the highlights are in the 1885 in Proof-65 as well as the 1886 and the 1912-D in MS-65 and the 1912-S in MS-63. These 4 dates alone are worth considering your purchasing the entire set since they are THE keys to the set. Individual descriptions are as follows: 1883 NC MS-60. Ever so lightly hairlined but very clean; 1883 WC MS-60. Good luster; 1884 MS-60; 1885 Proof-65. Brilliant with superb surfaces; 1886 Proof-65. Frosted devices and blazing luster. Virtually superb; 1887 AU-55; 1888 MS-63. Blazing luster with light golden toning. Fully struck including the cobs; 1889 MS-65. Blazing golden luster; 1890 Proof-63. Frosted and deeply mirrored fields; 1891 MS-65. Blazing white luster. Fully struck and virtually superb; 1892 Proof-63. Frosted devices. Light haze; 1893 AU-55; 1894 MS-60. Always a tougher date. Good luster. A few minor ticks; 1895 MS-60. A few obverse flecks; 1896 Proof-63. Dull in luster but very clean; 1897 MS-63. Bright luster; 1898 AU-55; 1899 MS-60. Light violet toning; 1900 MS-60. Facial ticks and one spot in the hair; 1901 MS-65. Frosty white luster. A light, almost indetectable hairline in Ms. Liberty's cheek keep this gem from full MS-67. Fully struck; 1902 MS-63. Bright luster; 1903 MS-60. Light obverse hairlines; 1904 EF-45; 1905 Au-55; 1906 AU-55; 1907 MS-63. A few obverse ticks and tiny flecks; 1908 MS-60; 1909 MS-60. Weak hair, typical; 1910 MS-60. Scattered obverse marks; 1911 MS-60. Obverse ticks and spots; 1912 MS-63. Good luster. Weak hair; 1912-D MS-65. Gem scarce in this condition; 1912-S MS-63. Satiny luster with some tiny obverse flecking. An overall handsome set that should bring spirited bidding. (TOTAL 33 PIECES) (PHOTO)



STATE OF THE MARKET

By Dave Lawrence

Unfortunately, I no longer deal in “raw” coins so I don’t get to see as many low grade Barbers as I used to. But I occasionally search the bourse floor for some better dates of all three series for a dealer friend who doesn’t attend as many shows as I, so the following comments are based on this experience plus my own direct dealings with the higher grades and the three “key” quarters which I inventory in certified holders in all grades.

In **DIMES**, full rimmed Goods are in strong demand with the possible exception of 1894-O, which always is in adequate supply. The 1895-O continues to enjoy a greater demand than supply and few nice specimens are available at shows except at strong premiums. The same for the 1892-S, 1896-O & S. VG’s of all better dates are particularly desirable, but my impression is that Fines are so high as to slow down demand. Incidentally, the 1893-O has long been overpriced in F – XF. I don’t know how it got this way, but it is always available and, from a dealer’s perspective, a slow seller.

Most Barber dimes in lustrous AU 55-58 are good sellers. But beware of the “better dates” in AU with problems. Some dates, like the 94-O, 01-S, 03-S are around in AU with severe cleaning, minor corrosion, etc. Even at a sharp discount these may not be a good buy in the long run. A significant exception is the 95-O, which always has value!

QUARTERS: Unlike dimes, quarters in full rimmed Good don’t excite too many people (the three “keys” are an exception). It takes a nice VG or better to be in demand these days. Some dates will always be in great demand in low grades VG – F+. Among these I count the 93-S, 97-S, 98-O, 99-O, 05-O, 08-S, 09-O. The 14-S is too abundant in G–F, but in strong demand in XF – AU.

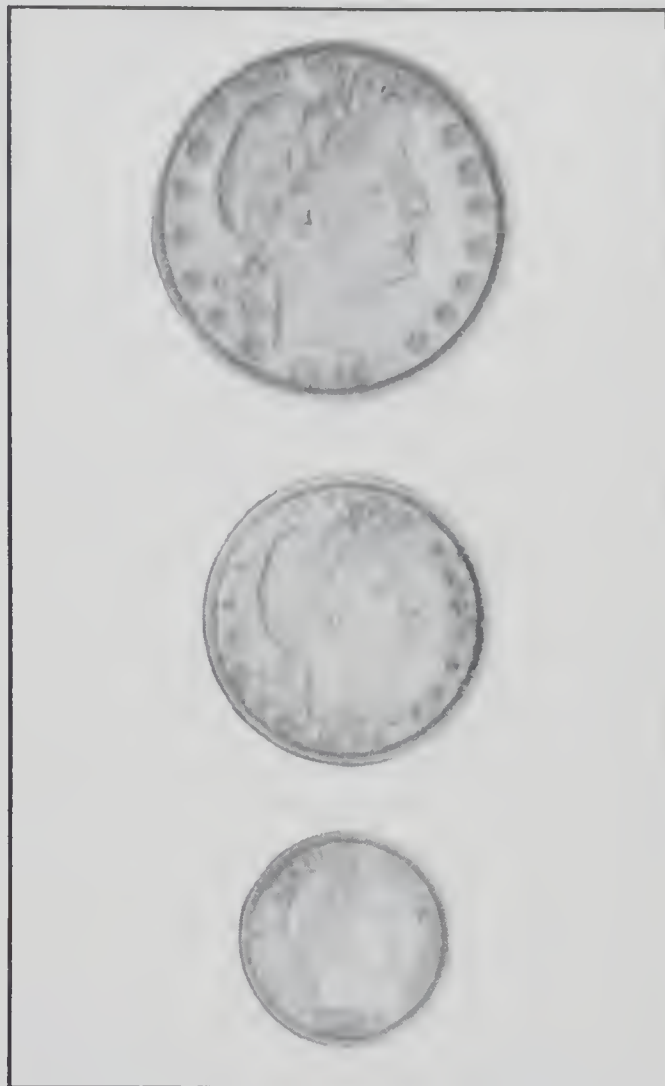
The KEYS enjoy good demand, especially the 1901-S. I haven’t seen such demand for this date in all grades, AG through MS64, since I started the Barber business in 1979! Right now I could use five or more Goods, especially if they have not been cleaned and can be certified. As always, beware of altered coins – at the ANA there was an AG3 being offered which just didn’t look right. The date position was good, but the “S” didn’t quite have the right shape. J.P. Martin, Jack Beymer and I all thought it was “no good.” Some added “S” coins are obvious, if you know what it is supposed to look like. Same for the date position in relation to the denticles.

AU quarters enjoy good demand, especially if certified. Quite a few of the Eliasberg coins graded MS66 or higher. Some are on the market at mind-blowing prices, but they are selling fairly well to collectors who want to build great collections.

HALVES: Strong demand still for early dates in full rimmed (or almost so) Good’s and VG’s. Supply may never catch up with demand. The 92-O is

currently under priced. In G it is the scarcest date in the set and worth at least 20% more than it currently sells for. VG's and Fines also enjoy strong demand, but watch out in AU. There are many dates that are tough in G, VG or F but too abundant in AU. When you are talking high grade on these halves you have a whole new set of rarities. Just take the 04-S for example. It's nothing special in G/VG, but exceedingly rare in mint state and highly desirable in XF-AU. Some others in this category are the 02-O, 03-P, 04-O, 07-S.

Eliasberg dates set records for both prices and grades. As a result of this collection, Barber halves (& quarters) now command a new respect in the numismatic community! ♦



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AVAILABILITY OF LIBERTY NICKELS IN MINT STATE

By Chris Weeks

The Liberty nickel is a coin with nostalgia and romantic allure, and saw hard use during its time. There are not that many Mint State coins available, compared to other series, and they are not priced, generally speaking, according to their availability by date.

This article will attempt to describe the rarity of Liberty nickels in MS grades. My observations are based on what I've seen at shows, dealers, and auctions over the years and may differ from published population reports. We must remember that all ideas concerning rarity (regardless of how some dealers talk about population reports), are opinion only. No one knows exactly how many coins exist in a given grade. All coins have not been graded, and even the grades of PCGS, NGC, and ANACS are not etched in stone. As William Sheldon stated, "As soon as someone puts his neck out that only so many exist of a given coin, along comes a nice old lady with half a dozen."



I will list my observations by dates from the most rare to least rare, rather than by date. Please note that the MS 65 rankings have open slots for positions 25–31. This is because certain dates higher on the list are so close in availability. I choose to rank these dates equally, (tie), rather than try to make an absolute list.

1886 – The rarest Liberty nickel in MS, but not the rarest in MS 65 or better. Probably 3rd rarest in MS 65 or better.

1896 – Second rarest in MS, also probably 2nd rarest in MS 65+.

1885 – 3rd rarest in MS, 4th rarest in MS 65+. Popular because of low mintage.

1890 – 4th rarest in MS, but the rarest Liberty nickel in gem MS 65 and better condition.

1894 – 5th rarest MS, probably about 6th in MS 65+.

1895 – 6th rarest MS, ranked 5th in MS 65+.

1888 – 7th rarest MS, about 9th in MS 65+.

1884 – 8th rarest MS, but only 16th in MS 65+.

1887 – 9th rarest in unc., ranking 12th in 65+.

1898 – 10th rarest in MS, also 10th in 65+.

1892 – 11th in rank in MS, but very difficult in MS 65 or better (tie for 6th).
 1909 – One of the most underrated. Surprisingly tough in MS, one of the toughest in 65+ (7th).
 1891 – 13th on my list, 8th in gem condition.
 1897 – 14th in MS, about equal to 1888 in gem (9th).
 1893 – 15th on the list, but a very rare coin in MS 65+, tied with 1909 for 7th.
 1889 – One of the more common dates in MS, of the 1880's, and somewhat overrated, about 13th in 65+. Many gems turn up at shows.
 1908 – A date that is relatively common in unc. (17th), but becomes extremely tough in MS 65+, about equal to the 1892, 1893, and 1909 (tied for 6th).
 1912-S – Priced according to popularity. Scarce in MS, (18th), rarer in gem (11th). Luster often poor, strike soft.
 1907 – Scarcer than other post 1900 dates in unc. (19th), rare in gem condition, like 1908 and 1909 (tied for 8th with 1891).
 1910 – 20th in MS, much rarer in gem or better (tied with 1912-S for 11th).
 1912-D – Next in line in MS, (21st), but popular, and ranked 16th in MS 65+ (with 1884).
 1906 – 22nd in MS, but 14th (rare and unappreciated) in MS 65+.
 1901 – 23rd on our roster, 15th in MS 65+.
 1902 – 24th on the list in MS, similar to 1901, as it is available in gem (17th).
 1899 – 25th in unc., 19th in MS 65+. The most available date in the 1890's.
 1904 – 26th in BU, and very common, also fairly common in MS 65+, ranking 24th of 33 pieces.
 1900 – 27th rank in new condition, 20th in MS 65 or better. A common type coin.
 1883 with cents – 28th on our list, 21st in MS 65+. Somewhat saved, but scarcer than 1883 no cents.
 1903 – 29th and common in MS, also common in MS 65 or better (22nd).
 1905 – 30th and very common in MS, (lower and upper grades), ranks 23rd in gem.
 1911 – 31st in unc., but 18th in MS 65+. A common date.
 1912 – 32nd on the list, also next to last (2nd most common) in gem or better.
 1883 no cents – The most common MS Liberty nickel, also the most common gem Liberty nickel.

When buying Liberty nickels in Mint State grades, check reverse strike on the lower wreath; look for good luster; lack of spots; and very light or no toning. Many are toned light gold with blue highlights. The 1890's dates, generally speaking, are scarcer than the 1880's coins.

Editors Note: The accompanying photo is the Eliasberg 1913 nickel, graded PR-67 the finest known of only five struck. This coin captures most of the news regarding this beautiful; nickel series, but as Chris points out there are many other wonderful opportunities for the Liberty nickel collector to enjoy. Thanks Chris!



This picture comes from your editors scrapbook. I am yet to acquire a dime struck off center as they are quite scarce.



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